

**Catch Me if You Can:
Why Leaders Invite International Election Monitors and Cheat in Front of Them***

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Until 1962, there were no recorded cases of international election observation in sovereign states.¹ Today, election monitoring is widely referred to as an international norm, and it is rare for a developing country to hold an election without inviting international observers.² Upwards of 80 percent of elections held in non-consolidated democracies are now internationally monitored, and many leaders engage in the puzzling behavior of inviting foreign observers and orchestrating obvious electoral fraud in front of them. As illustrated in Figure 1, the rate of observed elections increased substantially between 1960 and 2004, even while an increasing number of elections were criticized by international observers. Negative reports from election monitors have been linked to domestic uprising and electoral revolutions, reductions in foreign aid, exclusion from international forums, and other forms of internationally imposed sanctions.³ Given these potential costs, the fact that so many leaders of sovereign states continue to invite foreign observers presents an empirical puzzle. Why has the decision to invite foreign election observers—and the corresponding international involvement in clearly domestic political processes—become an international norm?

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The majority of existing work on international norm formation focuses on two causal paths: norms that result from attempts to facilitate international cooperation and norms that result from the work of committed activists, referred to as norm entrepreneurs.⁴ Motivated by the

¹ Prior to 1962 a number of plebiscites and referenda in occupied or disputed territories were internationally supervised (Beigbeder 1994, Waumbaugh 1920, 1933).

² Consistent with much of the literature, I define a norm as a “shared standard of behavior appropriate for actors with a given identity.” See Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, Florini 1996, Katzenstein 1996, Klotz 1995. For discussions of the norm of international election observation, see Bjornlund 2004, Kelley 2008, Rich 2001, and Santa-Cruz 2005.

³ This topic has not yet been treated rigorously in the literature, but a thorough reading of cases in which fraud is alleged by international observers highlights many well-publicized cases in which the government faced internationally imposed costs because they were condemned for manipulating the election.

⁴ For representative works involving norms and international cooperation, see Schelling 1960, Keohane 1984, Keohane 1986, Krasner 1982, and a more general discussion by Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner 1998. For widely

trajectory of election observation, this article presents a third path to international norm development. Using the logic of signaling in international relations, I offer an interest-based theory that explains how international norms can be generated even in the absence of norm entrepreneurs or incentives for cooperation.

Several powerful theories of norm development exist and have been fruitfully applied to a number of issue areas, yet they do not sufficiently explain how international election observation became an international norm. In the most widely cited theory of international norm development, offered by the social constructivist literature, norm development is described in ideational language: norm entrepreneurs, motivated by principled ideas, seek to change international or domestic behavior through the generation of new international norms.⁵ Although instrumental logics play a part in many arguments—the work of these activists may be intended to, for example, generate costs for actors who fail to comply with the new norm—norm entrepreneurs are central in initiating and spreading the new behavior. Entrepreneurs and activists, however, were conspicuously absent when election observation was initiated and began to spread.

For institutionalists norms are embedded within international institutions and are therefore generated along with them, frequently as a result of demand for interstate cooperation or through imposition by powerful states. In a similar vein, but initiated in the economics and international law literatures, norms and other social conventions can develop “spontaneously” as a result of repeated interactions, and persist because they are Nash equilibria.⁶ In this literature,

recognized work on norm entrepreneurs, see Klotz 1995, Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, Finnemore 1996, Nadelmann 1990, Risse Ropp and Sikkink 1999, Price 1998, and Thomas 2001.

⁵ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

⁶ Sugden 1989. See also Axelrod 1986 and Koh 1997. However, in contrast to the argument presented here, this literature focuses primarily on norms that generate mutually beneficial cooperation.

norms are created because they help facilitate cooperation by, for example, providing focal points, common knowledge, or by constraining or ordering preferences.⁷

In contrast, I argue that the norm of international election observation is the unintended result of the strategic response by state leaders to changing international emphasis on democracy. Specifically, when powerful states expressed a preference for democratic regime types, initially in the early 1960s and overtly in the 1980s, the premium for identifying as a democratizing regime gave “true-democrats” an incentive to signal their democratic credentials to international audiences.⁸ Although there were other possible signals of democratization, such as opposition victory, these leaders chose to invite international election observers as an action that distinguished their regime as one committed to democratization.

As the potential rewards for demonstrating a commitment to democracy increased, other benefit-seeking leaders imitated the signal regardless of whether or not they were committed to democratization. This widespread and repeated behavior, coupled with the growing importance of democracy to international actors, changed international expectations such that inviting international election observers became an international norm. Once accepted, international actors used election monitoring as a screen to evaluate the democratic credentials of states. Although in the early period of election observation observers were only invited to elections likely to be clean, by the late 1990s, a government’s refusal to invite observers became a conspicuous signal that the election was not legitimate.

A brief clarification is warranted. There is a common misperception that norms and rationality are at odds with one another, resulting from what has been called an “unfortunate

⁷ Schelling 1960, Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998.

⁸ The international emphasis on democracy is a consequential and relatively unexplored variable within international relations (McFaul 2004) but is more thoroughly explored in the international law literature on the emerging right to democratic governance (Fox and Roth 2001, Franck 1992, Rich 2001).

conflation between methodology and substance.”⁹ As Fearon and Wendt summarize this misperception, “some see rationalists as arguing that people follow norms only because (and when) it is useful to do so, whereas constructivists allow that people can be motivated to follow norms simply because they think it the right or legitimate thing to do.”¹⁰ Similarly, as Keohane observes, “norms can consist of standards of behavior which are widely regarded as legitimate; they do not necessarily embody ethical principles that override self-interest.”¹¹ Despite the now widespread recognition by both rationalists and constructivists that norms and rationality are interrelated, the literature detailing exactly how instrumental action leads to norm development remains sparse.¹²

Additionally, this article relates to the literature on the consequences of democracy promotion and work examining international influences on domestic politics. By modeling the incentives of state leaders as influenced by domestic political constraints and international pressure, I explore the conditions under which leaders have the incentive to fake democracy (or other internationally valued characteristics) in order to please international audiences. Thus, this article should be of interest to scholars of democratization and democracy promotion as well as those interested in the “second-image reversed” and “two-level games” frameworks.¹³

In the following sections, I develop the argument in more detail and formalize it as a screening game. I then generate observable implications of this theory, and evaluate these implications empirically using a new dataset of all elections from 1960-2004.

⁹ Kahler 1998, 933.

¹⁰ Fearon and Wendt 2002, 61.

¹¹ Keohane 1986, 21. Also see Goertz and Diehl (1992) for a discussion of variation in the deontological component of norms.

¹² See Checkel 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; and Kahler 1998. Several authors discuss strategic interaction surrounding norm formation (Barnett 1998), or argue that values and interests matter in norm formation (Abbott and Snidal 2002, Zacher 2003).

¹³ Gourevitch 1978, Putnam 1988. See also Gleditsch and Ward 2006, Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006, Pevehouse 2003.

Signaling and International Norm Development

International election monitors are always invited by the host government. The first known invitations from sovereign states to international actors were refused on the grounds that international election monitoring violated sovereignty.¹⁴ As late as 1990, the United Nations refused invitations from states for the same reason. Although there were advocates for democracy and democracy promotion, there were not advocates for the spread of election monitoring per se. Even prominent election observers like Jimmy Carter and the Carter Center were reluctant to pressure governments to invite international observers.¹⁵ Notably, for international organizations that have now institutionalized the practice of election observation, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, observers must be officially invited and credentialed by the host government. Election monitoring has always been a choice for election holding leaders, and the most prominent international actors were initially reluctant to send election monitors. Absent international pressure, why did states begin inviting international observers? Further, why do they persist in doing so, even as observers have grown more likely to criticize fraudulent elections?

The practice of election observation was triggered by the increasing value of democracy to powerful international actors.¹⁶ Responding to this change, state leaders began inviting international election monitoring in order to demonstrate their commitment to democratic elections to international actors. As the value of democracy increased and became more widespread, most notably at the end of the Cold War, the signal of inviting international

¹⁴ Beigbeder 1994, Santa-Cruz 2005, Slater 1967.

¹⁵ As Bjornlund writes, "Election monitoring became the most prominent activity of the [Carter Center] almost by accident, as an extension of its efforts to promote peace." (2004, 75).

¹⁶ Burnell 2000; Carothers 1999; Crawford 2001; Franck 1992, Rich 2001, Smith 1994.

observers was mimicked by other state leaders, many of whom were not necessarily committed to democratization, but who were interested in garnering international benefits.

To illustrate how signaling behavior can trigger a new international norm, I formalize the state leaders' decision to invite international observers. The model is used to illustrate that when democracy is rewarded by international actors, two equilibrium outcomes are possible. Viewed over time they help explain the initiation, spread, and endurance of the norm of election observation.

True and Pseudo Democrats

Throughout this article, national leaders of transitional countries are referred to as “incumbents.” This assumed actor can be one individual or a group of leaders, depending on the regime type. After elections are announced, they choose whether to invite international monitors and to what degree they will abide by the rules of a democratic election. I assume that there are two general types of incumbents: “true-democrats” and “pseudo-democrats.”¹⁷

A common assumption in political science research is that the primary goal of incumbent politicians is to maintain power. This is often a useful assumption, but it can be misleading when applied to countries without institutionalized political rules. For some leaders in democratizing countries, the goal of democratization trumps the goal of staying in power. Throughout democratic history, there have been leaders who have put their desire to lead their country toward democracy ahead of their desire to stay in office. U.S. President George Washington was one of the first prominent politicians to do so,¹⁸ and transferred power to an elected successor despite popular opinion that he should serve indefinitely. Since that time, a number of incumbent

¹⁷ This is not an inclusive typology of all leaders. There are also those leaders who do not hold elections, and those that are already leading consolidated democracies.

¹⁸ At the time, George Washington was considered a “modern Cincinnatus.”

politicians have risked their own popularity and political future in order to help their country progress toward democracy.

I define true-democrats as those incumbents who obey the letter and the spirit of electoral laws: they follow rules regulating electoral competition (they do not commit electoral fraud) and comply with expected behavior following an election (if they lose, they peacefully transfer power). Put simply, they act like leaders in established democracies, working to maintain power within the confines of democratic institutions.

For other leaders of countries in transition, the assumption of power hungry politicians remains useful. Pseudo-democrats hold free and fair elections if they believe that they are popular enough to win outright, and if they are not sure that they will win, they manipulate the election to their benefit. The crucial differences between true-democrats and pseudo-democrats are that first, pseudo-democrats are willing to cheat and, second, if they are defeated, they do not willingly transfer power to another party.

The other major actor in the development of election observation is the international community, represented primarily by powerful western states.¹⁹ I assume that the international community can be modeled as an actor in order to examine how a leader's decision to invite election monitors is influenced by the expected international response. During the Cold War, I focus exclusively on the preferences of western-aligned actors. Since the Cold War, in the context of international democracy promotion, an expanding number of actors have shared similar preferences on democracy and frequently act in concert through intergovernmental organizations. Organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States,

¹⁹ This is a somewhat controversial actor because the international community does not exist as a cohesive unit. For this chapter, I assume that it does exist and that its relevant preferences favor democracy. Assuming the existence of the "international community" as a cohesive actor is a pragmatic modeling decision. In reality, the "international community" is an amalgamation of states and IOs which act independently.

the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the European Union have made official proclamations confirming their preference for democracy and transparency in other states in the world.²⁰ They have backed up this preference for democracy with significant investment in democracy promotion and increases in the amount of aid that is linked to progress toward democratic and transparent institutions. Enforcement of these commitments is rarely coordinated and undoubtedly uneven. Nevertheless, diffuse responses to state behavior by international actors can be sufficient to influence leaders' decision calculus.²¹

Promoting democracy is just one of several foreign policy goals, and their relative importance has changed over time. During the Cold War, the declared preference for democracy was easily trumped by anti-communism, and after the Cold War the West's preference for democratic regimes could still be overridden by high geo-political importance (the US and Egypt for example). However, to varying degrees, democracy has served as one of the characteristics that developed democracies value and promote in other countries.

International election observers do not typically represent individual states, but pro-democracy international actors use their reports when evaluating the quality of an election. Their presence at an election is primarily to judge whether the election meets international standards or not, and is therefore not modeled here as a strategic decision. In practice, international observers maintain the ability to "move the goalposts" depending on a variety of factors specific to the election, including their desire to be invited to future elections in the country, the anticipated

²⁰ Among many documents that discuss these official proclamations, see the series of United Nations documents entitled "Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections, specifically A/RES/44/146; and the OSCE's 1990 Copenhagen Document. See also Goodwin-Gill 2006; Diamond 2002; and Carothers 1997, 2002.

²¹ This point is similar to Tomz's argument about state reputation in international capital markets. "Investors do not need to explicitly coordinate or even know each other to have beliefs about reputation or 'type' of government." (2007, 26-27)

consequences of a negative report, or their wish to support a process that they judge is moving in the right direction. Different organizations may be more or less risk adverse. Nevertheless, international observation missions generally benefit from accurate reporting because it is consistent with their goal of supporting democracy (by separating true-democrats from the imitators) and improves their own reputation.

The Allocation of International Benefits

In the late Cold War, the West valued several specific characteristics in other states. In descending order, the characteristics they valued included a state's commitment to anti-communism, a state's geo-political position, and finally a state's commitment to democracy. Above all else, the West valued anti-communism in other states. Holding other factors constant during the 1980s, the West also professed a preference for democracy.²² For anti-communist countries that were already aligned with the West, benefit-seeking leaders could increase their value to the West by becoming more democratic.

The benefits that the international community allocates to states based on their value include but are not limited to international legitimacy, foreign aid, membership in international organizations, and increased foreign direct investment. These international benefits can also be withheld or withdrawn as a penalty for various reasons, including actions related to democratic reversals. Different states may seek different types of international benefits, and the theory is agnostic about whether states are seeking legitimacy or material benefits.

As a rule, the international community prefers to support incumbent leaders of countries judged to have high value, although the characteristics valued change over time. Formalizing the concept, assume that the West assigns a score of S to every incumbent leader seeking

²² For documentation of this statement, see Burnell 2000; Cox, Ikenberry, and Inoguchi 2002; Chand 1997; Smith 1994; and Stokke 1995.

international benefits. This score can be based on any number of criteria. For simplicity, assume that the West assigns this score based on three criteria: support for or against communism, geopolitical position, and commitment to democracy, represented by s_1 , s_2 , and s_3 . Each score is also assigned a corresponding weight of w_1 , w_2 , and w_3 . Therefore,

$$S = s_1 * w_1 + s_2 * w_2 + s_3 * w_3, \text{ where } w_1 + w_2 + w_3 = 1 \quad (\text{Equation 1})$$

Let s_1 range from -1 to 1 with -1 representing a very pro-communist country and 1 representing a completely anti-communist country. Let the expected amount of international benefits that a state receives given its score be $F(S)$. Assume that $F' > 0$, or that the higher the value of S , the greater the amount of expected international benefits.

$$F(S) = F(s_1 * w_1 + s_2 * w_2 + s_3 * w_3) \quad (\text{Equation 2})$$

$$\frac{\partial F}{\partial s_3} = F' * \frac{\partial (s_1 * w_1 + s_2 * w_2 + s_3 * w_3)}{\partial s_3} \quad (\text{Equation 3})$$

So,

$$\frac{\partial (s_1 * w_1 + s_2 * w_2 + s_3 * w_3)}{\partial s_3} = w_3 \quad (\text{Equation 4})$$

Thus, $\frac{\partial F}{\partial s_3} = F' w_3$, with F' representing some positive amount of international benefits. Because the values of w sum to one, a change in w_i necessarily implies an opposing change in at least one other value of w .

During the Cold War, increasing s_3 would only lead to a small boost in international benefits because w_3 was small. After the Cold War, the value of w_3 increased relative to w_1 and w_2 . Given the above theory of the allocation of international benefits, this implies an increase in the share of benefits allocated based on a state's perceived commitment to democracy.

How would the increased value of commitment to democracy change the behavior of benefit-seeking states? During the Cold War, characteristics other than democracy were valued

by the West when choosing how to allocate international benefits. However, it is reasonable to assume that *ceteris paribus*, the West preferred supporting democratic states over non-democratic states. Upon recognizing the growing preference for democracy, leaders of benefit-seeking states that were already clearly aligned with the West could marginally increase their share of benefits by signaling their commitment to democracy. Note that signaling a commitment to democratization does not necessarily imply actual democratization, and could be consistent with existing studies that show little positive relationship between democratization and increases in foreign aid tied to democracy.²³

Gradually, other countries in similar positions vis-à-vis the West also invited international observers. Influential international actors did not press for international observation, nor did the organizations sending observers invest in high quality observation methods. During the Cold War, the impetus to invite international observers was entirely with incumbent leaders seeking a marginal increase in their international benefits. The Western international community was primarily concerned with anti-communism, beginning to be concerned with democratization, and relatively indifferent to the practice of election observation.

At the end of the Cold War, a state's commitment to anti-communism or non-communism dramatically lessened in value relative to its preference for democracy. As the preferences of the international community changed toward overt global preference for democracy (with geo-political importance remaining most important), the actions of benefit-receiving countries and the international community changed in response.

Screening Democracy

The following model formalizes the argument outlined above about the conditions under which state leaders are likely to invite international election observers. I utilize a screening

²³ Crawford 2001; Knack 2004.

model rather than a signaling game because the international community sets the price schedule of international benefits prior to the start of the game.²⁴

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The sequence of decisions is as follows. Prior to the start of the game shown in Figure 2, the international community moves to determine the level of international benefits that are allocated based on commitment to democracy. These benefits were not necessarily linked to election monitoring per se until after the norm had developed. In the first stage, the type of the incumbent is determined by chance. The incumbent can be one of two types, a true-democrat or a pseudo-democrat. Let T represent an incumbent that is a true-democrat, and P represent an incumbent that is a pseudo-democrat. The probability of T is represented by γ , which is, of course, $0 \leq \gamma \leq 1$, and the corresponding probability of P is $1 - \gamma$. Incumbents can make two choices: First, they choose to invite international observers ($I=1$) or not ($I=0$). If the incumbent is a pseudo-democrat who invites observers, she then chooses the level of effort devoted to hiding her cheating ($H \geq 0$). True democrats never cheat, so I assume that $H/T=0$. For simplicity, assume that pseudo-democrats always cheat. The cost of hiding election fraud at level H is $c(H)$.

Nature moves and the incumbent can win or lose the election. The probability that an incumbent wins the election is denoted by p . For simplicity I assume that the probability of victory is the same for both types. If the incumbent loses the election, the payoff is zero, even if observers are invited.²⁵

²⁴ This distinction is important. Because international benefits were linked to democracy rather than directly tied to election monitoring, the initiation of election observation closely approximates a signaling game in which the signal is initiated by the informed player. After the development of the expectation that observers would be invited, international benefits were linked explicitly to election observation, thus creating a screening game in which the signal is called for by the uninformed player (Rasmussen 2007).

²⁵ Note that the decision to hold elections is not included in the model. A more complicated model including this decision does not change the predicted outcomes substantially, primarily because pseudo-democrats who are certain of their unpopularity never choose to hold elections.

Payoffs

For the incumbent, winning the election brings several benefits. Some of these benefits do not depend on the international community such as salary and domestic prestige. These benefits are denoted by B . Winning office also brings with it international benefits, which for convenience will be referred to as aid, and denoted by A . $A = F(S)$ as defined in Equation 2, or the amount of international benefits a state expects to receive based on its score. The reports issued by observers, denoted by R , are used in part to determine a given country's score. If cheating is detected, observers issue a negative report, $R=-1$, and if cheating is not detected, observers issue a positive report, $R=1$. Given that an incumbent is cheating, the probability that observers issue a negative report is a function of the level of effort devoted to concealing the cheating, $r(H)$. If the incumbent is a true-democrat, then the probability that the report is negative is zero because cheating is never revealed to the international observers. A is a function of inviting observers and the report they issue, denoted as $A(I,R)$, where $A(1,1) > A(1,-1) \geq A(0, \bullet)$. Note that $A(0, \bullet)$ is the flow of targeted international benefits if monitors are not invited.

Expected Utilities

Given the information above, I compute the expected utilities for the incumbent leaders. The payoff for losing the election is normalized to zero. For the true-democrats, the expected utilities are as follows.

$$EU_T(1,H) = p[B + A(1,1)] - c(H) \quad (\text{Equation 5})$$

$$EU_T(0) = p[B + A(0, \bullet)] \quad (\text{Equation 6})$$

However, since the true-democrat does not cheat or conceal cheating, $c(H)$ is always zero. The true-democrat will invite observers when $EU_T(1,H) > EU_T(0)$, therefore, true-democrats will invite when $A(1,1) > A(0, \bullet)$. So long as the international community provides some benefits

based on signaling a commitment to democracy that are greater than those benefits given if no signal is given, the true-democrat always invites international observers.

For the pseudo-democrat, the expected utility is represented by $EU_P(I, H)$. Equation 6 shows that the benefits from inviting observers are a function of the probability of victory and the probability that the report from observers is negative given the effort devoted to concealing manipulation. If the pseudo-democrat wins, successfully conceals manipulation from observers, and gains a positive report, she gains $A(I, I)$. If the pseudo-democrat wins but is caught cheating, the report is negative, and she gains $A(I, -I)$. Regardless, the pseudo-democrat who invites observers must pay the cost of concealing manipulation.

The presence of observers can reduce the probability of victory for a cheating pseudo-democrat. Therefore, when observers are invited, pseudo-democrats cheat enough to make the probability of victory equal to the probability of victory if observers were not invited. This extra effort devoted to cheating (and concealing the cheating from observers) is represented in $c(H)$.

$$EU_P(I, H) = p[B + r(H)A(1, -1) + (1 - r(H))A(1, 1)] - c(H) \quad (\text{Equation 6})$$

When observers are invited by a pseudo-democrat, there is an optimal level of H to conceal fraud without wasting effort. Let the optimal level of H be denoted by H_I , where $H_I > 0$. If the incumbent pseudo-democrat invites observers, the best payoff she can get is,

$$EU_P(I, H_I) = p[B + r(H_I)A(1, -1) + (1 - r(H_I))A(1, 1)] - c(H_I) \quad (\text{Equation 7})$$

On the other hand, if the pseudo-democrat does not invite observers, there is no point in concealing the fraud, and the optimal level of H is $H_0=0$. Therefore,

$$EU_P(0) = p[B + A(0, \bullet)] \quad (\text{Equation 8})$$

The expected utility for a pseudo-democrat who does not invite observers, and therefore does not conceal any electoral manipulation, is equal to the probability that she will win multiplied by the

domestic benefits of remaining in office and the international benefits allocated to that state based on other factors valued by the international community.

The pseudo-democrat invites if $[EU_P(1, H_1) - EU_P(0)] > 0$. In words, if the calculation in Equation 9 is greater than zero, observers will be invited. If it is equal or less than zero, they will not.

$$EU_P(1, H_1) - EU_P(0) = p[r(H_1)A(1,-1) + (1 - r(H_1))A(1,1) - A(0,\bullet)] - c(H_1) \quad (\text{Equation 9})$$

Notice that the non-international benefits, such as the salary from holding office, are no longer part of the decision to invite observers. The decision by a pseudo-democrat to invite international observers is a function of her probability of victory, the probability that cheating will be revealed, the size of international benefits for holding internationally legitimate elections, and the cost of electoral manipulation.

It is possible to simplify Equation 9 by assuming that the targeted international benefits are only available to those that invite international observers and are not caught cheating, or $A(1, -1) = A(0, \bullet) = 0$. Then Equation (9) above simplifies to

$$EU_P(1, H_1) - EU_P(0) = p[(1 - r(H_1))A(1,1)] - c(H_1) \quad (\text{Equation 10})$$

As the above expression shows, the pseudo-democrat is more likely to invite monitors in four scenarios: (1) as p , the probability that a pseudo-democrat wins the election, increases; (2) as the probability with getting away with cheating increases; (3) as the international reward for holding internationally approved elections increases; and (4) as the cost of hiding electoral cheating decreases.

In this model, the international community simply sets a schedule indicating the size of international benefits a state receives for given patterns of observed behavior (invite/not, reported cheating/not). In the simplest case, where $A(1, -1) = A(0, \bullet) = 0$, $A(1,1)$ is the bonus for

being (or seeming to be) a democratizing country. The international community maintains the ability to change the value of $A(I, R)$. In the theory modeled here, the international community simply sets a positive value for $A(I, I)$. This choice is determined by the model presented in Equation 1, and $A(I, I)$ can be assumed to be positive and increasing when w_3 , or the relative importance of democracy to international actors, increases.

How does this model explain the trend of more internationally observed elections? Given the above model, one explanation for the increasing trend of monitored elections is that $A(I, I)$ increased relative to $A(I, -I)$ and $A(0, \bullet)$. In other words, the West placed a larger premium on democracy. An alternative explanation for the increasing trend toward monitored elections is that cheating became more effective or cheaper. Formally, either $1-r(H_I)$ increased; or $c(H_I)$ decreased. A third possible explanation for the increase in observed elections is that electoral autocrats became more secure, or more likely to win a given election, worldwide (p increased). Although this proposition is theoretically possible given the model, the empirical evidence does not support the idea that autocrats have become more secure. On the contrary, Geddes shows that although there is variation in leaders' tenure in office between types of authoritarian regimes, the rate at which all types of authoritarian leaders leave office has increased since the end of WWII, and the failure rate within single-party regimes jumped dramatically beginning in 1990.²⁶ Carothers and Diamond provide additional support for the point that authoritarian (and semi-authoritarian) rulers were increasingly likely to be thrown out of office or face competition during the 1990s.²⁷

This leaves two possible, testable, and not yet refuted explanations as to why international election observation increased so rapidly since its inception: international election

²⁶ Geddes 1999.

²⁷ Carothers 2002; Diamond 2002.

observation spread because (1) the international benefits for looking like a democracy increased, or (2) it became easier to cheat in front of international observers. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive, and may in fact be related.

Discussion of Outcomes

The type of the incumbent may be revealed during the course of play, which itself depends on the quality of observers—taken to be exogenous in the model above. For example, given my assumption that true-democrats never cheat (and the implicit assumption that monitors never render false positives), if any incumbent is caught cheating by monitors, the international community knows that the incumbent is a pseudo-democrat. The international actors setting the benefit schedule and determining the (exogenous) quality of monitoring prefer that monitoring produces accurate screening. Given the preferences and assumptions outlined in the model, and the relationship presented in Equation 10 between investments by international observers in monitoring technology, $c(H_1)$; the ability of incumbents to conceal their cheating from observers H_1 , and the probability that a report will be negative ($1-r$), there are two general equilibrium outcomes of the game.

Since the true-democrat always invites when international benefits exist, there is one possible separating equilibrium: the true-democrats invite observers and the pseudo-democrats do not. Formally, if $p[(1-r(H_1))A(1,1)] - c(H_1) \leq 0$ the pseudo-democrats do not invite observers. If the international community outspends the pseudo-democrats significantly, thus driving up the cost of concealing manipulation; a separating equilibrium results in which true-democrats will be separated from pseudo-democrats because inviting observers (and hiding the electoral manipulation) will have become too costly for the pseudo-democrats. This separating

equilibrium also holds if the international benefits allocated based on commitment to democracy are small relative to the cost of hiding electoral manipulation.

Recall that true-democrats invite if $A > 0$. If, on the other hand, $p[(1 - r(H_1))A(1,1)] - c(H_1) > 0$, a pooling equilibrium results in which both types invite observers. In words, if pseudo-democrats are able to effectively outspend the international observers and stand to gain sufficient international benefits when their strategy succeeds, then true and pseudo-democrats should invite international observers.

What is the relationship between the quality of monitoring and the incumbent's manipulation strategy? Let r (the probability that the monitor's report, R , is negative) be a function of investments by international observer organizations in better monitoring (denoted by z), and in hiding technology by the incumbent (denoted by y); $r(H; z, y)$. Higher z makes H less effective in lowering r . An increase in y makes H more effective in lowering r . The basic relationship can be represented in the following way:

$$r(H; z, y) = z/(Hy+z) \quad (\text{Equation 12})$$

This relationship generates a dynamic prediction: if observers get better at catching electoral manipulation (an increase in z), pseudo-democrats have the incentive to improve their cheating technology (y), and vice versa. Based on this model, we should observe escalation in both the quality of monitoring and the ability of incumbents to conceal their cheating. Additionally, as a pooling equilibrium is reached in which both types invite international observers, the actors that benefit from an accurate screen, including true-democrats and international observers, have the incentive to increase the cost of the signal of a leader's commitment to democracy, making it more costly for pseudo-democrats to fool observers.

Norm-Enforced Equilibrium?

Benefit-seeking leaders “pooled” on the signal of inviting observers, illustrating how election observation spread through mimicry of true-democrats. In combination with the increasing value of democracy to a variety of international actors and a desire by members of the international community to support democratizing states, the widely practice behavior of inviting observers became an expected behavior for leaders of developing countries. The norm of election observation was generated from the strategic situation faced by state leaders and the international community. It developed in the absence of explicit advocacy, yet the normalization of the practice brought increased investments in monitoring technology and made the decision to invite observers more risky for pseudo-democrats.

The screening model does not fully explore why pseudo-democrats continue to invite international election observers even when the probability of being criticized for cheating has increased. During the period when election observation was initiated and began to spread, there were no costs for failing to invite observers. Recall that the international community was initially indifferent to the practice of election observation, and only began sending observers reluctantly after repeated requests from state leaders. Many international actors, in particular the United Nations, were concerned that sending observers constituted a violation of state sovereignty. The benefits tied generally to democracy rather than explicitly to election observation were sufficient to generate incentives for the pooling equilibrium described above. Once the norm developed, rather than simply rewarding governments that invited observers and received favorable reports, international actors became willing to link benefits explicitly to election observation and to

punish leaders for not inviting observers. Thus, the existence of the norm of election observation and the pooling equilibrium are mutually reinforcing.²⁸

This latter change was crucial. Counterfactually, this argument suggests that in the absence of an internationally held norm that observers would be invited, we should rarely observe leaders inviting observers and getting caught and punished for cheating. Without an externally imposed cost for not inviting international observers, the increased quality and professionalization of election observers should have resulted in fewer observed elections. As reflected in Figure 1, election observation has not decreased with the rate of internationally criticized elections.

Explaining the Spread of Election Observation: Empirical Evaluation

This section explores whether or not the empirical evidence is consistent with the implications of the model. The dependent variable is whether a given election was internationally observed or not.²⁹ The driving force in the explanation of the spread of election observation is a relative increase in international benefits for countries acting like democratizing countries. Therefore, the overall probability that a given election will be observed should be preceded by increases in international benefits.

H1: If the level of international benefits tied to democracy increases, then the probability of an observed election should also increase.

As more leaders invited observers, the presence of international election observers became more widely understood as a signal of a country's commitment to democratize. As more

²⁸ This concept drawn on Grief 's (2006) theory of endogenous institutional change.

²⁹ There has been a concurrent trend toward domestic non-partisan election observation (DNPO) that also deserves exploration. However, because the motivation for this article is on why international actors have become so explicitly involved in a clearly domestic process, I do not consider DNPO in this analysis. It is worth noting that 84% of all elections observed by DNPOs are also observed by international observers, and out of all internationally observed elections, only 42% were observed by DNPOs in this time period. Additionally, approximately 57% of all DNPO missions are funded by or coordinate with international observers (data collected by the author).

countries in a given region invited international observers to their elections, individual leaders were more likely to mimic their behavior and link positive outcomes to international observers.

Thus, leaders are more likely to recognize the benefits of inviting observers (or more likely to feel pressure to invite) if neighboring countries also invite observers. The hypothesis is not meant to imply that leaders gain more international benefits when their neighbors invite monitors. Rather, incumbent leaders were more likely to recognize that there were gains to be had or losses to be avoided by inviting international observers when nearby countries began inviting monitors.

H2: The probability that an election will be monitored increases as the percentage of other elections that are monitored in the region in the previous year increases.

In addition, all else held equal, incumbents who are relatively close to having free and fair elections have less to conceal from observers. Those leaders operating in a very undemocratic political environment will be less likely to invite monitors because the likelihood that they will be criticized is much greater than for those leaders who already operate within somewhat democratic institutions. Therefore, given that consolidated democracies are excluded, the chances that an election will be monitored will be higher if the country is more democratic. Following the model, a higher level of democracy would decrease the costs of hiding electoral manipulation. This hypothesis should not be interpreted as an indication of whether a leader is a true-democrat or a pseudo-democrat, which is theoretically independent of the domestic political institutions. Overall, excluding elections in long-term developed democracies, higher levels of democracy prior to the election should make it less costly for a pseudo-democrat to hold an election that looks clean to international observers, thus increasing the probability that a given election will be monitored.

H3: The probability that an election in year t will be monitored will increase as the level of democracy of the country in year $t-1$ increases.

In addition to examining these hypotheses, the next section also discusses the observable implications of the escalating game of strategy played between pseudo-democrats and international observers.

Data on Elections and Election Observation³⁰

The explanation of the spread of election observation is examined using an original dataset of all national level elections from 1960-2004. Each observation in the dataset is a separate election. Elections in developed countries that are long-term consolidated democracies are excluded. Developed long-term democracies are substantively different from those countries that are expected to invite observers today. Including them in the analysis would unnecessarily complicate the predicted relationships. Developed countries are defined as those countries that do not receive development assistance from the OECD. Long-term consolidated democracies are those defined by Arend Lijphart, and have been considered democracies for forty years or more.³¹ States with populations less than 250,000 are excluded. A total of 137 countries are included for some period of time.

In addition to collecting data on observed elections, it was first necessary to collect data on all election dates because comprehensive dataset of all elections was not available during the data collection for this project.³² Unlike existing comparative data on elections,³³ elections are

³⁰ A replication dataset will be made available by the author upon acceptance for publication.

³¹ Lijphart 1999, but Venezuela and Colombia are included in the analysis.

³² Election dates since 1960 were compiled from a variety of sources, but were drawn most heavily from the data handbooks edited by Dieter Nohlen (with coeditors varying by region); and Tatu Vanhanen's Polyarchy manuscript. From 1998 to 2004, the IFES Election Guide was the principal resource for election dates. The dataset compiled from these resources was supplemented with Lexis-Nexis newswire reports, the SUNY-Binghamton Center on Democratic Performance's Election Results Archive, the Lijphart Elections Archive, and web-accessible information from governmental election management bodies in individual countries.

³³ Such as Polity IV or the Database of Political Institutions.

included even when they lack genuine competition or are for offices that have little political power. Truncating the dataset by eliminating highly uncompetitive elections would bias the results. If multiple offices are elected on the same day (or during one consecutive multi-day election period), the election is treated as one observation. Elections on separate days, even when held in the same country in the same year, are treated as separate observations (for example, a legislative election in June and a presidential election in December are counted as separate observations). Although data were collected on multi-round elections, the statistical analysis examines only first round elections. National referenda on constitutional or other substantive issues were excluded. In some isolated cases incumbents held referenda on their own continued rule. These plebiscites are equivalent to elections with only one candidate, and both are included in the dataset.

Observed Elections

The dataset on observed elections covers all election-holding countries outside of the developed democratic world. Data were collected from election observation missions of varying quality.³⁴ Data were first collected from organizations that sponsor election observation missions. Because some reports have been lost or were never made public, for each election after 1978, newswire reports on dates surrounding elections were also searched for mention of international observers.³⁵ In this manner, the record of whether an election was monitored was checked by organization and by election.

Therefore, for each election (each observation in the dataset), there is an indication of whether or not it was observed and, when possible, by whom. Many elections are observed by

³⁴ I make the point that I included missions of varying quality only to highlight that no groups were excluded based on the perception that their missions are of low quality.

³⁵ Combinations of the terms international, foreign, monitors, and observers were used in Lexis-Nexis searches.

multiple groups, and both international NGOs and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are recorded as sponsors of observation missions.³⁶

Measuring International Pressure for Democracy

Recent scholarship provides qualitative evidence of a large shift in international pressure for democracy in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.³⁷ A quantitative evaluation of Hypothesis 1 requires a measure of international benefits (or costs) tied to democracy. Leaders, however, vary in their preferred types of international benefits, and may seek benefits like international legitimacy that are not quantifiable. Recall from the formal model presented above that leaders should be responding to a change in w_3 , or the weight given to democracy in the allocation of international benefits. In the model, this price schedule is set by international actors before the game is played. Therefore, the ideal measure of international benefits would be an evaluation of what state leaders expected to receive as a result of inviting observers.

Unfortunately, this is impractical for a variety of reasons. I turn to proxies for the changing international interest in democracy. Note that these measures are intended to be an indication the relative value of democracy over time to international actors, not an exact measure of the likely benefits from inviting election monitors.

³⁶ Organizations Sending Election Observation Missions include the following international NGOs: British Helsinki Human Rights Group, the Carter Center, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA), GERDDES-Africa (Research Group on the Democratic, Economic and Social Development of Africa), IFES (formerly International Foundation for Electoral Systems), International Human Rights Law Group, International Republican Institute for International Affairs, Latin American Studies Association, National Democratic Institute, Washington Office on Latin America. The following IGOs also record missions: Arab League, African Union (formerly Organization of African Unity), Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), Commonwealth (organization of former British colonies), Commonwealth of Independent States, Council of Europe, Economic Community of East African States (ECOWAS), European Union, Organization of American States, *Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie*, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, South African Association for Regional Cooperation, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations.

³⁷ Burnell 2000; Cox, Ikenberry and Inoguchi 2000; Ottaway and Carothers 2000; Newman and Rich 2001; Youngs 2001.

I use two different measures that gauge different aspects international pressure for democracy. Because leaders observe the relative value of democracy and then decide whether to invite observers, both measures are lagged by one year. First, I use a measure of aid committed by OECD donors to support “government and civil society” in each country. Donor commitments to support this sector should be a signal to other state leaders of broader donor interests in supporting democracy. Specifically, for each aid recipient, *International Pressure for Democracy I* is the total amount of aid committed to government and civil society in the previous year (logged). The data were reported by donors to the OECD DAC from 1973-2004. Prior to 1973 these data were not reported by donors. The lack of reporting may be an accurate reflection of the relative importance of government and civil society to OECD countries in the 1960s and early 1970s, with the exception of President John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress in 1961-62.³⁸ To account for both possibilities, the models are run for two time periods. For 1974-2004 all data are complete, but for the 1960-2004 period, one model is run without the aid variable, and in a third model, zeros are substituted for the amount of aid to government and civil society prior to 1974.

For the second proxy for international pressure for democracy, I use data on “democratic conditionality”, collected from 1977-2004. Democratic conditionality is defined as the use of “explicit restrictions on customary trade and aid relations imposed with a clearly stated political objective... and accompanied by demands for some form of political liberalization.”³⁹ These data capture the explicit use of economic benefits to try to encourage democratization, which is also a reasonable proxy for international interest in supporting democracy. In order to capture how these actions would influence leader perceptions of international benefits tied to democracy, I

³⁸ Smith 1994.

³⁹ Marinov 2004, 7. Data were obtained through personal correspondence with Nikolay Marinov.

use the number of sanctions tied to democracy in the region in the previous year, called *International Pressure for Democracy II*.

Other Variables Explaining Observed Elections

Other variables that should be associated with the presence of international election monitors are the percentage of elections in the region that were internationally observed in the previous year, following Hypothesis 2.⁴⁰ As suggested by Hypothesis 3, election observation should be associated with the existing level of democracy in the country, included as the country's lagged Polity2 score from the Polity IV dataset.⁴¹ The models include an interaction between the Polity score of the previous year and the percentage of observed elections in the region in the previous year. Although developed long-term democracies are excluded from the dataset, those countries that have become full democracies during the observed time period may not be expected to invite international observers. A year variable is included in all models.

Results

The dataset consists of 1298 individual elections held between 1960 and 2004. This total includes only first round elections held in independent states, and excludes microstates. Missing Polity scores reduce the number of observations to 1217. The average number of elections held by a given country in this time period is ten, but ranges from one election to twenty-four elections. The data are neither traditional time-series nor panel data. Although the data are pooled by country, the variation in the number of temporal observations for each country means that statistical tools for binary time series cross-section analyses are not appropriate.⁴² In order to

⁴⁰ For each country, the percentage does not include elections that took place in that country in the previous year. See also Simmons and Elkins (2004).

⁴¹ Marshall and Jaggers 2000.

⁴² Statement made based on information in Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998). Because the number of time points (T) is not "reasonably large" for all units, their recommended method for binary TSCS data is not appropriate. Some countries in the dataset have as few as one election. There is a very high likelihood of temporal dependence between

control for panel heteroskedasticity the data are clustered by country. Because the decision to invite observers in the current time period is not likely to be independent from the decision to invite observers in previous time periods, I also include an indicator of whether any previous election in the country was internationally monitored.⁴³

The specification of the logit model is represented as:

$$P(\text{observed election} | x_i) = 1/(1+e^{-x_i\beta})$$

Where $x_i\beta = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ democracy} + \beta_2 \text{ regional percent observed} + \beta_3 \text{ regional percent observed}^* \text{ democracy} + \beta_4 \text{ international pressure for democracy} + \beta_5 \text{ previous invitation}$

The results presented in Table 1 show that the null of hypotheses 1-3 can be rejected. In order to provide clearer substantive interpretations of the relationships in the data, Table 2 presents changes in predicted probabilities when the variables of interest are set at different values.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

When all independent variables in Model 2 are set at their median, the probability that a given election is observed is 27%. Table 2 shows that the variables associated with the largest change in the probability of an observed election are the percentage of other elections observed in the region and the presence of observers at a previous election. All else held equal at mean values, a country in a region with zero observed elections in the previous year has a 14% chance of inviting international observers. If the rate of observed elections in the previous year is increased to 73% (the 75th percentile of the variable), the probability that the election will be observed is 49%.

elections in the same country. Without enough time points, I instead control for temporal dependence by including a dummy variable if any previous election in the country had been internationally observed.

⁴³ Summary statistics are included in Table 3.

There is also strong path dependence: countries that have invited once are very likely to continue inviting. When all other variables are set at their median, the presence of observers at a previous election in the country increases the probability that an election will be observed by about 32%. Within countries, the decision to invite is not independent across time, as expected with the development of a norm.

Both measures for international pressure for democracy are statistically significant in the predicted direction. An increase in the amount of aid targeted toward government and civil society 25th to 75th percentile (*International Pressure for Democracy I*) is associated with an increase in the probability that an election will be observed by about 11%.

Thus far, all predicted probabilities were generated from the estimates in Model 2. Predicted probabilities for Model 4 are also presented in Table 2. *International Pressure for Democracy II*, or the total number of sanctions tied to democracy in the region in the previous year is associated with about a 9% increase in the probability of an observed election.

Both available international benefits and regional diffusion are associated with an increased probability of election observation, and are consistent with the argument that they contributed to the spread of election observation. Additionally, the pattern of regional diffusion likely increased the chances that incumbent leaders perceived a link between inviting international observers and increased benefits.

When included in the model as separate variables, having a higher level of democracy and being located in a region with many observed elections both increase the probability of an observed election. The overall interaction term, as presented in Models 1-4 in Table 2, is

negative and significant. However, the effect of the interaction term should not be summarized as uniformly negative because the dependent variable is binary.⁴⁴

Finally, although not presented as formal hypotheses, the dynamic relationship between pseudo-democrats and international observers generates several other observable implications. As election observation spread, pseudo-democrats had the incentive to cheat using methods that were less likely to be caught by international observers, and international observers had the incentive to improve their methods of catching electoral manipulation. Therefore, the quality of monitoring as well as the quality of cheating should increase jointly. In general, as more pseudo-democrats invite observers and get away with electoral manipulation, the data should show more negative reports by observers, and an increase in techniques intended to obfuscate electoral manipulation.

Note that in the first period of election observation, only true-democrats invited observers. After pseudo-democrats began mimicking the signal of true-democrats, it was not necessarily automatic that observers would be willing or able to catch and criticize fraudulent elections. The first negative reports were in the Philippines in 1986, South Korea in 1987 and Panama in 1989. Observers may or may not have been willing to criticize elections prior to this time, but the quality of elections is endogenous. “Negative reports” were recorded as those that seriously question the legitimacy of the election or the accuracy of the result.⁴⁵ Because the

⁴⁴ Ai and Norton 2003.

⁴⁵ In order to code whether a report from international observers was “negative”, the summary statements from observation reports were collected and separated from identifying information about the election. When official reports were not available, observer statements as reported by the international news wire were substituted. Isolated from information about the election, reports were coded by the author as “negative” if the summary statement challenged the winner of the election or significantly questioned the legitimacy of the process. In addition, two relatively rare cases were systematically coded as “negative”: when an official delegation issued a report surrounding their withdrawal from the country due to the poor quality of the pre-election period, and when an organization was invited by the government, but typically after a preliminary assessment, issued a statement announcing its refusal to send observers because there was not possibility of a democratic election. Of the 132 reports coded as negative, 12 were borderline cases that were very critical of the process, but were not explicit in

majority of observation missions report some irregularities, only the summary statements from observers were used: either as reported at the press conferences following the election or in the official final report. Elections for which irregularities were noted but observers did not overtly question the winner or the process were not counted as receiving a negative report. As Figure 1 illustrates, the rate of negative reports increased substantially after 1993.

As some incumbent leaders got better at manipulation, observers invested in higher quality election observation. For example, the evidence suggests incumbents tried to mimic the signal of true-democrats by inviting observers who were unlikely to criticize, or by inviting multiple observer groups likely to reach conflicting reports. Figure 3 shows two related trends: the percentage of observed elections at which more than one observer group was present, and the percent of all observed elections monitored by at least one “high quality” mission, defined as any observer organization that had previously issued a negative report. These trends are suggestive.

First, the presence of multiple observer groups creates the possibility that observers will reach difference conclusions, and increases the chances that at least one report will be positive. Note that multiple observer groups at an election are also a sign of international interest in the election. However, conflicting reports can be used by the government to discredit the observers. For example, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the OSCE/ODIHR regularly monitor the same election and issue conflicting reports. The CIS has been accused of judging elections on the basis of Russian foreign policy priorities rather than the conditions of the election. The CIS, in turn, accuses the OSCE of bias and of inappropriately applying Western standards. Even reputable organizations have been pitted against each other by incumbent leaders attempting to discredit criticism of their elections. Perhaps as a result, reputable

condemning the election. Reports that pointed out problems in the electoral process but that were not viewed as critical were not coded as negative reports.

observers have made increased efforts to coordinate their information and their decisions about where to observe.

Second, Figure 3 shows that although a majority of elections since 1990 have been observed by at least one organization with a reputation for criticizing fraud, there are still leaders who invite observers that, judging by their previous behavior, are less likely to criticize. Note that the trend of election monitoring grew most rapidly when few organizations had developed a high-quality reputation.

As cheating incumbents have improved their methods of manipulating the election and receiving a favorable report, reputable international observers invested in higher quality election observation. Coordination with and training of domestic election observers, increased numbers of short-term observers, long-term election observation, parallel vote tabulation, media monitoring, evaluations of the legal framework surrounding elections and a general increased willingness to criticize problematic elections are all changes in method that make it more difficult for cheating incumbents to escape without international criticism. For cheating parties, these changes have made it more difficult, although far from impossible, to successfully manipulate an election in front of high quality observers.

Conclusions

This article began with an empirical puzzle. Many leaders invite international election observers, cheat in front of them, and face negative consequences as a result. For pseudo-democrats, being caught cheating by international observers can lead to international condemnation, domestic uprising, and an overall reduction in the probability that they will maintain their hold on power.⁴⁶ The existence of the norm of election observation explains this

⁴⁶ See Fearon 2006 for a discussion of election observation and its effect on the probability of popular coordination to enforce democracy.

puzzle. Without the norm, held and enforced by the international community, the rate of observed elections should have begun decreasing by the end of the 1990s as observers grew better at catching election fraud and more likely to sanction fraudulent elections. Instead, the rate of observed elections continued to increase during this time period, even as the risks associated with inviting increased. All else held equal, one could argue that a number of leaders who invite international election observers would prefer a world without the norm of election observation.

In other issue areas within international relations, compliance with such costly norms has been explained as the result of pressure from activists or powerful states. Election observation, in contrast, was initiated by state leaders to signal a government's commitment to democratization. As more international benefits were linked to democracy, leaders who were not necessarily committed democrats also had the incentive to invite observers. This repeated behavior resulted in acceptance of election observation as compatible with respect for state sovereignty. As a result of the normalization of election observation, international actors began to punish leaders who did not invite observers and invest in improving election observation technology, thus reinforcing the norm even as compliance with the norm became more costly for pseudo-democrats.

Within international relations, this piece is not intended to prove or disprove existing theories of norm development. Rather, I provide an alternative causal path to norm development by showing how diffuse and instrumentally motivated action can generate new international norms. Counterfactually, I suspect that the norm of election observation would not have developed if it had begun with ideationally motivated norm entrepreneurs. Norm entrepreneurs, in contrast to reluctant international organizations, would have been motivated to develop high quality election monitoring from the beginning. In this counterfactual world, pseudo-democrats

would have simply refused to invite observers on grounds of sovereignty and election observers would never have been invited to bad elections. It was only the fact that election observation was initiated by leaders of developing countries that international actors accepted monitoring as an action consistent with respect for sovereignty.

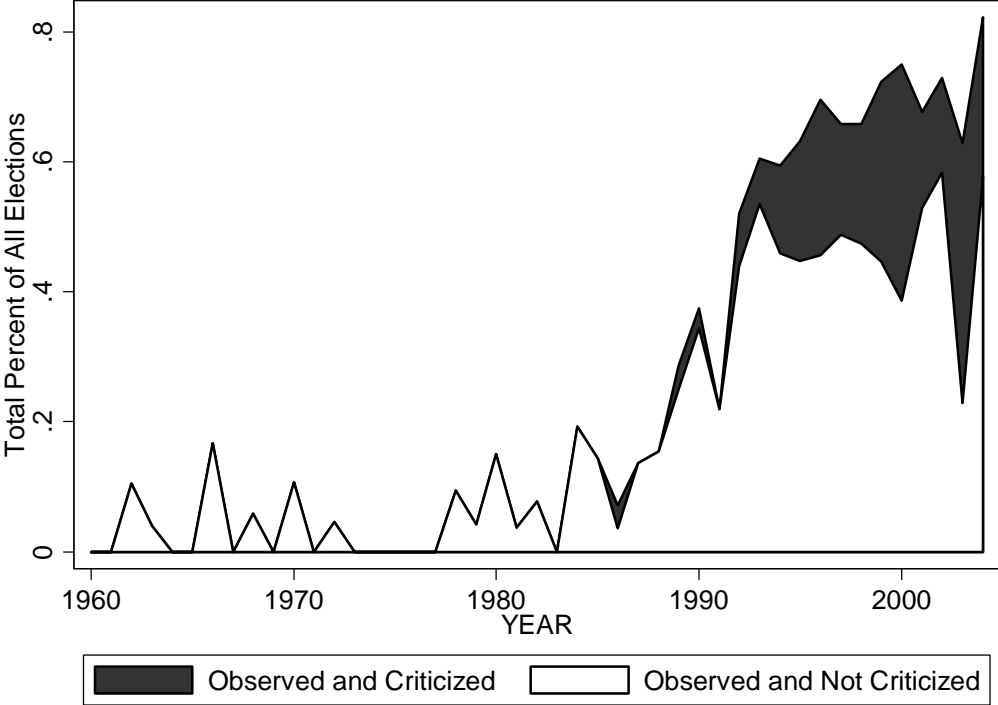
Although the theory was developed to explain election monitoring, it can also be applied to other international norms that are triggered by changing values or interests among influential international actors. Any change in the characteristics valued by the international community is likely to provoke strategic responses by states seeking to maximize international benefits. One possible application of this theory would be to the question of why states hoping to attract foreign investment are now expected to invite evaluation from credit rating agencies like Moody's and Standard and Poor's. A number of states invite (and pay for) credit rating even when they have little chance of receiving an acceptable score. Other potential applications of this theory include explaining monitoring or compliance norms within international regimes, such as the acceptance of monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency. More closely related to election observation, international pressure for democracy arguably generated other international norms, and this signaling theory of norm development may help explain why even the most autocratic leaders choose to hold elections; or why certain technical features of elections, such as independent election commissions, are becoming increasingly accepted as standard practice.

This theory also examines the effects of democracy promotion without naively assuming that democracy promotion trumps all other interests. Any change in the characteristics valued by international actors can induce change in state behavior. Although not fully explored in this article, the incentive to "fake" democracy, generated by internationally benefits tied to

democracy, may in part explain why many countries remain stuck in the institutionally ambiguous space between democracy and autocracy. Similar dynamics may be at work in other issue areas like human rights, labor standards, and environmental policy.

In addition to applying this theory of norm development to other issue areas, further research should explore the domestic effects of election observation, including the interaction between domestic and international observers, the frequency of conflicting reports, and other consequences of democracy promotion efforts.

Figure 1: Rate of Internationally Observed Elections, 1960-2004



Note: Excludes Long-Term Consolidated Democracies and States with Population < 250,000

Figure 2: Screening Commitment to Democracy

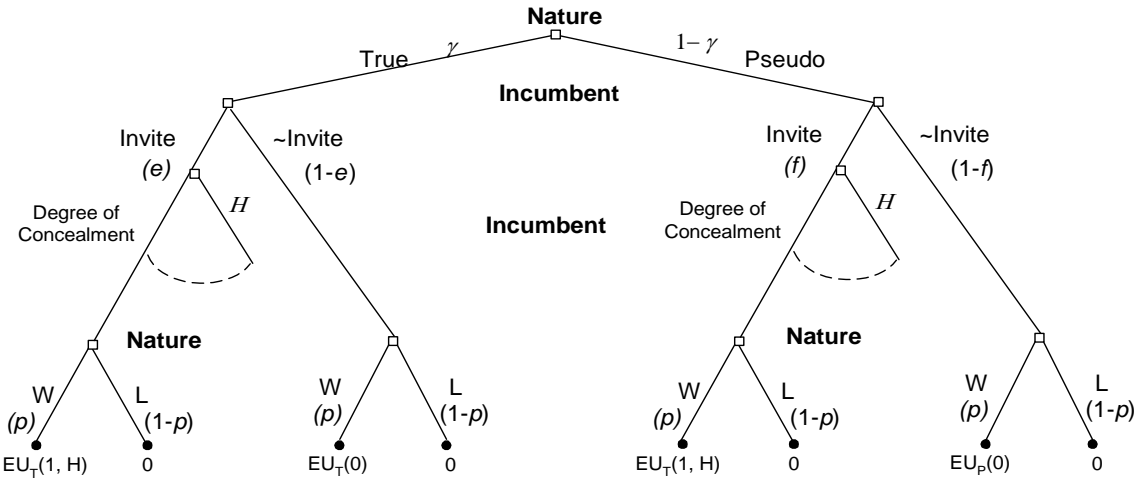
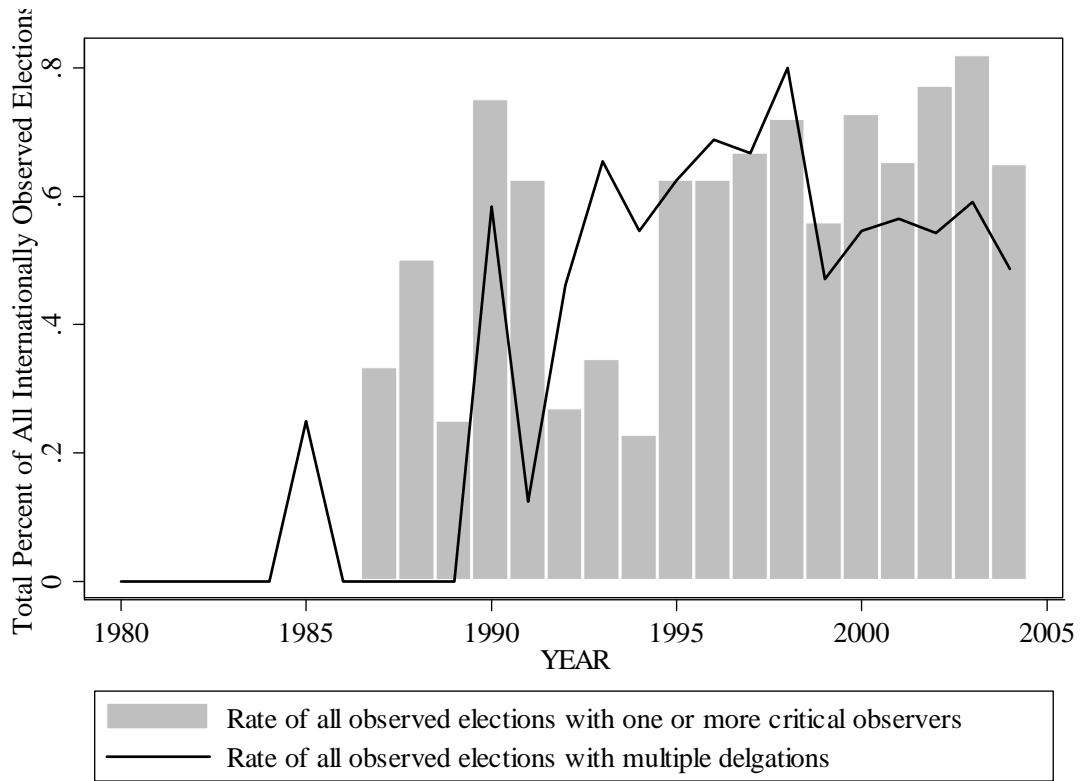


Figure 3: Observed Elections with Critical Monitors or Multiple Observer Groups



Note: Critical observers are those organizations that have previously criticized an election in any country.

Table 1: Binary Logit: Observed Elections, Models 1-4

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	1960-2004	1974-2004	1960-2004	1977-2004
Polity Score (<i>t</i> -1)	0.062*	0.056*	0.059*	0.048
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)
Regional Percent Observed (<i>t</i> -1)	2.392**	2.451**	2.423**	1.923**
	(0.408)	(0.413)	(0.402)	(0.436)
Previously Observed Election	1.609**	1.377**	1.537**	1.478**
	(0.282)	(0.270)	(0.277)	(0.281)
Interaction (Polity* Reg. % Obs.)	-0.204**	-0.180**	-0.190**	-0.143*
	(0.058)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Year	0.062**	0.059**	0.049**	0.063**
	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.018)
International Pressure for Democracy I ⁴⁷		0.067*	0.065*	
		(0.030)	(0.030)	
International Pressure for Democracy II ⁴⁸				0.148*
				(0.062)
Constant	-126.146**	-119.405**	-100.672**	-127.077**
	(28.530)	(36.675)	(32.800)	(35.994)
Observations	1217	937	1217	889
Robust standard errors in parentheses				
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%				

⁴⁷ Total Aid Committed to Government and Civil Society in Country, logged (*t*-1)

⁴⁸ Total Number of Democracy Sanctions in Region (*t*-1)

Table 2: Effects of Country Characteristics on the Probability of Inviting Observers

When this Variable...	Shifts from ...to ...	Change in Prob. Of Observed Election (upper and lower bounds)	Change in Prob. Of Observed Election (upper and lower bounds)
		Model 2, 1974-2004	Model 4, 1977-2004
Lagged Polity Score	25 th to 75 th percentile	15.5% (1.6% 30.3%)	13.0% (-0.9% 26.7%)
Percent Observed Elections (regionally in previous year)	25 th to 75 th percentile	35.2% (23.0% 47.1%)	26.9% (13.8% 40.5%)
Previous Invitation	Zero to One	34.1% (22.2% 45.3%)	32.1% (23.0% 47.1%)
International Pressure for Democracy I	25 th to 75 th percentile	11.2% (2.2% 20.3%)	
International Pressure for Democracy II	25 th to 75 th percentile		8.8% (1.5% 16.0%)

Notes: Boldface indicates that the 95% confidence interval around a simulated first difference did not contain zero, signifying statistical significance. Based on a logit model estimated in Stata 10.0, with first differences drawn from 1000 simulations performed by CLARIFY (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003).

Table 3: Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Observed	1298	0.334	0.472	0	1
Polity2 (<i>t</i> -1)	1217	-0.272	6.816	-10	10
Regional Percent Observed (<i>t</i> -1)	1298	0.312	0.356	0	1
Polity2*Percent Observed	1217	.878	3.062	-8.471	10
Previous Observed Election	1298	0.343	0.475	0	1
Year	1298	1985	13.072	1960	2004
International Pressure for Democracy I (Ln of Total Aid Committed to Government and Civil Society in Country (<i>t</i> -1))	990	4.734	4.450	0	13.334
International Pressure for Democracy II (Total Number of Democracy Sanctions in Region (<i>t</i> -1))	992	2.558	2.154	0	8

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